

HOUSE RESOLUTION 252

By Harmon

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor an exceptional  
Tennessean, United States Army Air Force  
Captain William B. "Bill" Staggs.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, Captain William B. "Bill" Staggs of the United States Army Air Force is one such courageous volunteer who proudly served this nation with the utmost courage and dedication; and

WHEREAS, born in Portland, Tennessee, on May 4, 1922, Bill Staggs entered the United States Army Air Force in September of 1942, and was sent to Santa Ana, California for ground school; he soloed in April of 1943, in a Ryan PT-22 at King City, California, and flew the PT-13A at Gardner, California, the AT-6 and P-40 at Luke Field in Phoenix, Arizona, and the P-47 at Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, in the autumn of 1944, Captain Staggs was assigned to fly the P-51 Mustang with the 55th Fighter Group, 38th Squadron of the 8th Air Force based in Wormingford, England; the P-51's mission was long-range escort of American and British bombers over Germany; Bill Staggs flew fifty-six missions totaling 279 combat hours from late 1944 to the end of the war; and

WHEREAS, during World War II, the three squadrons of the 55th Fighter Group destroyed over 580 enemy aircraft, and Bill Staggs was officially credited with destroying three; of particular note is the destruction of one Focke-Wulf 190 for which he is not credited, but which resulted in Captain Staggs being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross; and

WHEREAS, while flying bomber escort over Germany in the spring of 1945, Bill Staggs came to the aid of a fellow P-51 pilot who was in a losing battle with a German plane; he skillfully maneuvered his plane behind the Focke-Wulf and shot the plane off his fellow pilot's tail; Captain Staggs later learned the pilot in the other P-51 was an 8th Air Force General; and

WHEREAS, in June 1945, for his heroic act in saving the General's life, Brigadier General M. C. Woodley, Commanding General of the 8th Air Force's 66th Fighter Wing, awarded Bill Staggs the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement; and

WHEREAS, during his entire service in England, Captain Staggs was also awarded the Air Medal, for an act of meritorious service in aerial combat, and six Oak Leaf Clusters, which were awarded as an addition to the Air Medal with each Cluster representing an additional act of meritorious service; and

WHEREAS, after heroically serving his nation in WWII, this distinguished pilot returned to Tennessee and entered the Pharmacy School at the University of Tennessee, where he met his wife, the former Betty Merriman; and

WHEREAS, Bill Staggs enjoyed the loving companionship of his beloved wife, Betty Merriman Staggs, until her untimely passing in 1998; devoted to his family, Bill Staggs has always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order, and he is the proud father of five children, grandfather of thirteen grandchildren, and has three adoring great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Staggs's children are Bill Staggs, Jr., and his wife Judy, and they have three children, Amy, Susan, and Nancy; Amy and her husband Ty Draper have two children, Hadley and John; the late Jim Staggs and his son Jason; Henry Staggs and his three children, Ivy Allison, Wendy, and Lauren; Dr. Steve Staggs and his three children, Will and his wife Nicole, Ellen, and Charlotte; Penny Staggs and her husband Nick Tenpenny, and they have three children, Nicole, Hunter, and Will; Nicole and her husband Austin Henderson have a newborn son, Caleb Austin; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly should pause to remember the singular patriotism, courage, and commitment to duty of this exceptional pilot, pharmacist, and human being, Captain William B. "Bill" Staggs; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor  
United States Army Air Force Captain William B. "Bill" Staggs, a man of impeccable character,  
limitless courage, and stalwart commitment to his nation, reflecting fondly upon his bravery and  
dedication to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared  
for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.